Giving Directions in English

Imagine you're in a city different from your town, so it means you can easily get lost at some point during the trip, even if you are using Google map. So, it's really useful to know how to ask for and understand directions in English so you can reach your destination. It's also great to be able to give directions yourself to tourists or foreign colleagues.

So what words and phrases can help you give and ask for directions? Read on to find out!

First of all, you need to know some basic vocabulary. The most important words and phrases are:

Between	in the middle of two things
Next to	to the side of something
Behind	at the back of something
In front of	opposite
Near	in a close position
Far	in a distant position
On the corner	the angle where two roads meet
Left	on the west side or direction
Right	on the east side or direction
Straight (on/ahead)	stay on this road (don't turn)

It’s also helpful to know some common places people visit in a city, such as the following:

Bank	Where you can get money.
Post office	The place to send letters and buy stamps.
Bus stop	Where you wait for and get on a bus.
Park	A big public garden.
Museum	A place which exhibits old or interesting objects.
City center / downtown	The middle of a town.
Subway station	Where you take the subway (an underground train)
Mall	A shopping center with many shops in it.

Here are some examples:

- *Go along the street until you reach the traffic lights.*
- You’ll see a bank on the left.
- It’s about two blocks from here.
- I prefer going to the airport on the highway because it’s faster.

Some prepositions and adverbs can also help when you’re giving directions:

Traffic lights	Red, yellow and green lights to control the movement of traffic.
Crossroads	Where two roads meet.
Roundabout	Where two or more roads meet and traffic moves around a central island.
Street	A road in a city with buildings on each side.
Avenue	A wide road often with trees along it.
Highway	A fast road connecting cities with two or three lanes.
Block	An area of buildings in a city between four roads.
Tunnel	A covered road or path.

For example,

- *My office building is in front of the mall.*
- Go straight on for about one kilometre.
- The cinema is next to the bank.

Asking for directions

When you ask for directions, remember above all to be polite. So start by saying one of the following phrases:

- *Hello. Can you help me, please?*
- Good morning. May I ask for some help?
- Excuse me, could you help?

Once you have someone's attention, you can ask for help to reach your destination. You can do that by using one of these phrases:

- *Could you tell me how to get to the bank?*
- Do you know where the museum is?
- We can't find the subway station. Is it near here?
- Where can we find a park near here?

If you're not sure you're going in the right direction, you can make sure by asking:

- *Are we on the right road to the city center?*
- Is this the right way to the mall?
- What's the best way to get to the airport?

Giving directions

In the same way that you need to ask directions when you travel abroad, foreigners visiting your city might ask you directions, and what better way to practice English than to help them? 🙂

Here are some common phrases you can use:

- Go past the cinema. (Pass the cinema.)
- Go along this road.
- Go straight on/ahead. (Stay on this road – don't turn.)
- *Go through the tunnel*.
- At the roundabout, take the first exit.
- Turn left at the crossroads.
- Take the second right.
- It's on your left.
- You'll see it in front of you.
- It's on the other side of the road.
- You're going the wrong way.

If you travel abroad for work or pleasure, knowing how to ask and understand directions is really important.

The best way to learn directions is to do a proper English course that gives you the chance to practice in a controlled environment with guidance and feedback. At Wall Street English you can learn how to give and understand directions through fun interactive activities and by practicing in small classes led by native teachers